

CHAPTER TEN

THE BATTLE OF CASSINO

THE Royal Palace of Caserta contained both Fifth Army Headquarters and Fifteenth Army Group Headquarters. It could have swallowed the Algiers AFHQ for the Mediterranean Theater as well. It was a monstrous encampment, worthy of the enormous military bureaucracy and its equipage. Lt. Alfred de Grazia, AUS, CAC-MI would never get to the end of it, whether by foot or car. The Bourbon Kings of The Two Sicilies built it of a rich ochre stone in the Eighteenth Century with the grand and marvelous flourish of a Versailles. Its large gardens and exotic trees shade noble walks along which military officers might amble while deciding how to wrest Italy from the Germans.

To me the set-up was dismaying. It would appear that the Army had been taking on a long, long-term, a decade-long lease. Luckily for my morale, the weather was turning bad, the mud was beginning to climb to the tops of my boots and lick at my leggings, and the combat propaganda detachment was bivouacked on the fringe of the palace; it occupied a couple of olive-drab pyramidal tents.

I was out on the job every day contacting the units of the line, which was at the Volturno River when I first started up; the line then was forced in a score of bloody engagements to the outskirts of Cassino, where it got stuck. As the year drew to a close, I was awaiting news of the birth of my "son," and hung around the tents excessively, or so it seemed to Lt. Col. Weaver, himself tent-loving, who asked me courteously whether I shouldn't be out making the rounds of the Front. This embarrassed me a little: that I could have been imagined as slacking or lazy or afraid; yet I did not want to confess a real reason for dragging my feet, that I believed any moment now might bring the Message from the Red Cross.

Devotedly I detailed my existence to my Wife, saying little of the baby as the fateful date, December 29 - my own birthday, too - came and went; it was a crisis, and I did not want to put a wrong construction upon the absence of news. On the First of January I described the day before, December 31, 1943:

The New Year has started out as a howling banging affair. A wind blew up last night and even now twenty-four hours later is threatening to deprive us of our means of support. As I write I feel that my eyes have run amuck; it seems as if the tent grows bigger and smaller, constantly. Very disturbing and very true. It does grow bigger and smaller and the wind comes in great breathtaking swooshes that leave one to marvel that the pegs are still grounded.

I spent a most bitter day and still have a few shivers left over. The rain, sleet and wind crawled into our very marrows. The Army is perfectly miserable. Wretched soldiers, drenched to the skin, their tents blown down or the rain blown in, a sea of mud and a welter of newly created lakes, the sides of the roads raging torrents and snow in most places a few hundred feet up.

I went down to the dump to get some shells fixed up and found complete devastation. The crew were huddled in a little room in a stone manger [shed?] looking on the hostile outside dejectedly and miserably. Not only had their records blown away, but also their tents, leaving a pile of messy trash half buried in mud. The chaos revealed a cornet which was being reclaimed by one of the boys, and with an eager lip I tried it out. I suppose that it was strange to play "Stardust" out in the open like that, with numb lips and fingers, but it was only a small absurd bit in the whole Krazy-Kat scene.

Hundreds of trees have blown down, many of them olive trees and hardly expendable. It is a conspiracy of wind and rain. The rain softens and the wind gives the mortal blow...

Last night was spent in the tent. We drank a little rum and wine, opened and fried a tin of tongue which I believe Mom or you sent me, and sang a few songs. At midnight we fired our guns, adding to the general impression of a giant night battle with tommy-guns, rifles, pistols, BAR's, and even a machine gun which I could have sworn I heard. We came in and drank some coffee. I stayed up a while cleaning the guns and about the time I went to sleep, the wind began. Out of the daze of slumber, I remember various articles tossing about the tent and scary blasts which one could hear starting in the trees far away and which came towards and through us in a final rush like huge breakers...

If one takes to signs, the year will be mighty and awful. It may be good, too, because I saw a beautiful rainbow in the midst of all the rigors today.

The four officers - Dabinette, Foster, Herz and myself - slept in one tent. The office of the detachment was in another. An account of it made up most of another letter a week later (still no word of the baby):

Perhaps, in view of your expressed hatred of offices, I can describe what an army field office looks like. First there is the tent, dark green or camouflaged, and then inside, instead of beds, you have folding camp tables which hold hardly nothing except a pencil and a piece of paper. If you are lucky, you also have a chair, barring that a stool or box or anything that will stave off collapse. With this table you must execute masterful maneuvers to open maps which are peers of anything Standard Oil ever put out, including as they do every house or former house, and everything down to a machine gun in size. Every once in a while a wire crew comes in to put in a phone or take it out, which doesn't mean much since it never works, except of course to add to the confusion. The phone is a tantalizing instrument, you must admit. Half the time you get a whisper, which leads you to bellow enthusiastically into the mouthpiece, rising in a great crescendo on the margins of comprehension and resulting in two messages at least, neither understood or correct. Or there may be three or more, depending on how many other units become attached to your wire meanwhile. If the other members of the "office" have not been driven to seek out the enemy in hand-to-hand combat by the confusion and concussion of the phoning they are having a merry time with their maps and overlays. (The overlay, for your information, is a heavy, semi-transparent paper that when placed in a certain position on part of the map, will show you strange and interesting things that somebody in a different staff section has found out about the war.) The tent can hold one man waving a map and overlay about, but more than two is hell, more than a man can stand. One of the results of this map-waving activity is to camouflage the stove which is strategically placed in the center of tent where you can't help tripping over it. Of course, the stove is well-tended. Every once in a while, in this closed-in canvas, sealed from the frigid air, an attendant lifts the lid, puts a mixture in, and a great, thick, black and oily column rises and covers the tent down to within three feet of the dirt ground. The attendant is coal-black in the oriental tradition.

A few moments later, it is safe, though unhealthy, to raise yourself from the prone to resume work. Whatever you were doing need not lay as you left it however, because the clerk, profiting from the demoralization and cloaked by the smoke screen, has gone about putting what is laughingly called the "file" in order. That means sweeping off all the odd bits of paper on the desk into a clumsy wooden basket labelled "in" or "out" - no difference. Some days later, when there is no comic magazine or copy of the Stars and Stripes available, he may perform a ritual called "putting the file in order." He takes the basket and a handful of used folders, already used for three or four subjects a temps perdu, including Italian social security taxes, Fascist Gioventù and the PWB vehicle record, and places the papers from the basket into respective files, putting most of them in the thin files and none of them in the fat files. In cases where the logic is inescapable, he makes the choice appropriate, such as incoming personal mail in the correspondence file, etc.

Knowing how hard-pressed for time the clerk has been, very recently an assistant was solicited from a replacement center. The assistant might have done well if he had tried, but since he is little and ugly, he works like Goebbels to establish master propaganda plans. Today, due to the fact that the rest of us, forewarned, had seized all available vehicles and rushed to the Front, the Colonel was cornered by the new

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man who has made long extracts from the Bible which prove among other things that the Germans can't win. He wanted to shower the enemy with these convincing powerful words. Out of nowhere, the colonel was inspired to state that it might seem sacrilegious if the Germans then used the leaflets for toilet paper, as they are wont to do with extra ones. Highly impressed by this reason, the fellow retired to a corner of the tent, muttering something about making the paper rougher.. He is a holy terror. I gave him a note to someone down the line and he put it in an air-courier pouch bound God knows for where. One can only say that he has a certain utility in applying band-aids to people who burn themselves on the stove.

Odd people come around too, visiting firemen from the occupation team who want to get the smell of powder in their nostrils or to feel what an army is like. Or someone from Counter-Intelligence may call up to find out whether an Italian we have is a secret agent or is spying on a secret agent or just wants to become one. Our intelligence man can best answer that, but he is secrecy reductus ad absurdum and doesn't know where he is himself.

Then the mail comes in, which doesn't disturb the lack of routine at all. A package is opened and the walnettos spill out. The caramel gets stuck to the desk or some confidential papers and they are forever confidential. When the unlettered ones begin to curse loudly and the din is too much, Herz gets up and delivers a fiery oration on the need for quiet. But by that time, it's late enough for lunch anyway.

We retrace our steps to the matter of the baby. "He," "she" - I think "he" because my own mother, Kate, has borne four sons and no daughter - had been subject of a call from the American Red Cross well before Christmas. For no good reason, I received a garbled message contradicting my Wife's advices. The Secretary of Dr. "Jack" Greenhill (he is the eminent gynecologist who is also Lt. Johnny Hess' step-father) told them that the baby would be a girl and would be born in January. Remarkable on both scores, fifty years early in sex-prognosticating method, weeks late in length of term.

On January 13, I wrote:

...When I got back from the Front, I found a message to call the Red Cross. I did so, and a barely audible voice told me I was the father of a girl infant. He said both you and the baby were doing well and I could ask no more.. It looks as if I shall spend the future beating off suitors. That ought to be fun. When it comes down to it, I am just as happy with a girl as with a boy. Think how much a girl can accomplish in reference to the rest of her sex compared with a boy... I think we'll make her an all-around girl, swimming, cerebration, and socializing. Herz has already asked for her hand but I've told him, with your presumed approval, that she doesn't want to have anything to do with an old fogey.

She had of course written profusely, but the mails were slow; I wrote on January 24 that a batch of mail had been arriving, dated December 24, 25, 27, 29, January 3 and 4, chock full of details on how to give birth to babies, a difficult birth it had been, many hours long, the head was too large and was squeezed thin and had to be helped through by an incision, but Jack Greenhill did a masterful sculptural restoration afterwards with his strong skilled hands. Worse than anything that I had been suffering: Motherhood! Jack Greenhill tried to hold things off, he jested, to give her the same birthday as her father, but, what with everything else happening, he had all he could do to bring forth the strapping bawler at over nine pounds.

So now all of our correspondence would be carried on over the head of this infant, so to speak, enough about her in it to fill a pediatric textbook, avant-garde because there was so much love in it. We called her Kathryn and Esther, after the paternal and maternal grandmothers.

The worst campaign of the War - West of Russia, though some even doubt that - proceeded regardless. The soldiers could not believe that it would last so long: they kept expecting a breakthrough on some other part of the Front. The vast fleets of Allied tanks and vehicles could hardly be employed in the mountains and the mud. Italian mule companies had to supply the French,

Indian, and Polish infantry, trying to conquer the German bastion from the Northeast massif; most of the animals were killed or plunged to their death off the slippery trails.

The terrain and the immobility made it a battle of riflemen, mortar crews, sappers, and machine-gunners. (Riflemen were actually equally automatic-weapons men and grenade-throwers, and learned to employ bazookas to explode bunkers, where these failed against the too-heavy German tanks.) Among the Allied troops, the casualties were practically all in the infantry battalions; and in these battalions, each starting with about 400 rifles, 80% of the casualties were riflemen and lieutenants. Murderous to medics, too. The evil weather and incessant cannonading made life unbearable for those not hurt or diseased. Nor did you rejoice in the hurt and death around you. A Special Forces soldier sitting on the body of an enemy while poking C-ration from can to mouth: no insult intended, it was better than sitting in the mud.

Seven months passed, incredible, November to June, in an Italy that gave to fighting troops the lie about its famous climate, food, pleasures, and comforts. Its people remained human despite continual misery and misfortune: there were women who hung their wash within gun range, making soldiers feel foolish. In the middle of this period, in case anyone should wish to know, Lieutenant de Grazia has come and gone and come again.

The Campaign had its several phases, which I associate with the nationality of the troops principally engaged. The Fifth Army Command was American, under a British-commanded Army Group that controlled both it and the Eighth Army to the East. The troops were the most polyglot of the War: British, American, Canadian, New Zealand, East Indian (Hindu, Sikh, Gurkha, etc.), Polish, French (Continental, *Pieds noirs*, Algerian, Moroccan, Tunisian), Jewish, Brazilian, Italian. The American Headquarters Guard was Spanish-speaking, Puerto-Rican. One may mention more specifically Scottish, Irish, and any number of quasi-national contingents. Disgracefully, past racist policies kept American blacks out of combat whether as segregated units or individuals, though they supported part of the logistical chain from Naples; the French and British, in contrast, did embrace black African combat troops. The supplies, the equipment, the arms, were increasingly and mainly American and brought up by American transport.

Contacts with the Adriatic region were bringing in Yugoslav partisans, and I had by the end of 1942 been converted to support communist Tito's Partisans rather than the royalist "Chetniks" led by Draza Mihailovich. Why? Because my intelligence sources had brought in one report after another to the effect that Tito's men were doing much more damage to the Nazis and Fascists than did the royalists. Anyhow, I did not like Kings. "D" Section in Naples, my people, have swung over to Tito, and, as if by some concatenation of intelligences, Winston Churchill had decided that Tito was the man to support. So, when a couple of vigorous Yugoslav partisans were introduced to me, I said: "Any friends of Tito are friends of mine."

The first phase in the gruesome winter-long Battle was the series of struggles to reach the Gustav Line, pivoting on the Town of Cassino and on the huge Benedictine Monastery towering above it; American and British would argue about who did most to arrive at this point. The Rapido River Crossing, fought principally by the 36th American Division, of Texas National Guard ancestry, was the larger part of the second phase. The 442nd Japanese-American battalion, later regimental combat team, began to play its distinguished role. The American 34th Division also was launched into the impossible, and lost half its riflemen. Whose defeat was worse, the 36th's or the 34th's? Who failed? Before long, every fact would be known about both episodes. But, where every fact is known, the truth acquires a multiplicity and complexity never to be resolved into an answer. One thing was sure by now: a frontal attack upon Cassino was madness. Still, the Command ordered such again and again.

I regularly visited these units and the 45th and 3rd Divisions and 1st Armored Division, hearing and spreading gossip, examining their situation maps, which were better locally than those at Army HQ G-2. The next propaganda operations were planned. I asked them to shoot certain leaflets over selected targets, explained why, gave them copies and English translations of the material to be exploded over the Germans, and shared whatever information I may have had about the results of

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past firings.

They liked to hear my opinions about how the war was going generally and when it would end: I was a live source. They got their news regularly and ordinarily from the *Stars and Stripes*. They got letters and clippings from home. But Americans do not write much. They heard an occasional short-wave broadcast. Men came back from leave in Naples and told what they had heard from other soldiers there.

I supervised the conversion of smoke shells at the little ammo dump which my Team maintained, and told the artillery ammo trucks where and when to pick up and deliver the shells. In each shell were about three hundred leaflets carrying general and specific messages; as the shell which was set to explode at a certain height over enemy pathways or positions went off, the leaflets spread out in a pattern and drifted down to where they might be reached and read by the soldiers. It took about 15,000 leaflets to cover a division's front, about 50 shells. A single burst, about 100 yards up, on a windless hour, would usually bring the message near anyone below within a diameter of 150 yards. The Germans were told by their officers that they should turn in enemy propaganda without reading it, but they read and often kept it, even if, to the minds of Allied troops and the Propaganda Team for that matter, they seemed hardly responsive. They would have been showered with the paper at dusk, so that they could observe the fall and pick up the leaflets after dark, safe from both enemy and friendly fire.

Then, along the way, I sometimes visited infantry units and got their ideas of what might bother or affect in advantageous ways the conduct of the enemy, and I talked with prisoners or prisoner interrogators for their information about specific weaknesses and details that would lend authenticity to the propaganda when received by the enemy. This information went to the Team, the intelligence and ideas to Martin Herz and Hans Habe. Unfortunately, Habe caught jaundice and then contracted pneumonia and ended up in a hospital to the rear. When his Christmas gifts arrived from home, his friends saved the finer little pieces for him and devoured the rest, as he had bequeathed it to them, though they felt sad and a bit ghoulish doing so. Herz, too, contracted jaundice, which seemed to be endemic, but stayed on.

Like any profit-seeking businessman, I must explain to Tom Crowell, civilian printing manager, what was happening to his product in the course of processing and delivery. We discussed the crushing power of acceleration on the rolls of paper and tried to locate stronger paper that would stand the initial explosion, would not catch fire, would not be shredded when bursting out of the shellcase in the secondary explosion over the target. Tom had his operation camouflaged under canvas and it had to be seen to be believed. He had discovered in Africa a German tank-carrying truck, given up in the general surrender in Tunis, perhaps the largest non-trailer truck ever to have been manufactured. He had collected in it a Webendorfer offset press, a Miehle letter-press, a composing machine with linotype, a full hand-setting array of fonts, a ton of paper, and a paper-cutter of large dimensions. He painted the name, the "Gutenberg Special," upon it in large letters. He and his three soldier assistants lived in the truck.

The Team quickly developed an operating system that was professional, that is, that had routines, rules, standards, criteria for evaluation of results, testing and research. It was quite different from the organization, methods, equipment, and division of labor foreseen by the designers of the First Radio Mobile Radio Broadcasting Company a year earlier at OSS in Washington and Camp Ritchie. Proof of this came in a manual of combat operations for an army team, called *Functions of the Fifth Army Combat Propaganda Team*, the first ever achieved and the model for all to come. My hand was heavy in its writing and editing. Tom printed the book up nicely and bound it with glue. It was sent to Army units around the world. As part of its preparation, I worked on the perfection of firing tables for the typical American weapon, the 105 mm howitzer, for the weight of the removed smoke-canisters was different from the weight of the leaflets and the settings on the shell had to be adjusted accordingly; further, the wind operated on paper differently than upon smoke.

I also thought of producing effects upon the morale of more distant troops by the use of larger

cannons. The 155 mm howitzer was used for longer range and larger bursts, as well as for short ranges where profitable. An artillery officer told me of seeing a dead German half blown away by a 155 mm shell but with a hand still clutching a leaflet captioned, fittingly: "Now things will really be in earnest." I borrowed from the artillery a 155mm gun, together with its crew. I had its smoke shells converted to contain leaflets, five times as many as the 105 mm shell held. Then the piece was dragged to the foot of a long gully, and set up. I climbed up the gully to approximately where the shells would burst, and took cover. Then a prearranged cannonade with various settings brought about bursts and leaflet showers around different points that could be mapped. Thus I could prepare a kind of firing table to substitute for the normal tables of cannon of this calibre. I assured, too, the readability of the available paper stocks upon explosion. After a third round was fired, an American vehicle came bouncing down the trail; they thought that they were coming under enemy fire.

The amphibious landings at Anzio were really a third phase of the Cassino Campaign, tied in clumsily with the 36th Division Attack of the second phase. Early in the month, Herz and I are told of "Operation Shingle." A strong force was to be landed at Anzio, to cut the German lines running south to Cassino and perhaps trap the divisions now at the Front. Buck Weaver and the others figured that, if they were able to unsettle the minds of the German soldiers at Cassino a bit, they might give way more readily in the face of the coordinated attack along the Cassino Front. They might even be bottled up.

Secretly and carefully the leaflet was drawn up and printed. It mapped the landings, told the readers that they were in danger of being trapped, and recommended the usual ways out, all colored in the terms and mood of heroic pessimism: slacking off resistance, retreating, letting oneself be taken prisoner at the first opportunity.

On 22 January, Allied troops landed on the beaches of Nettuno and Anzio against insignificant resistance; even the minefields were a negligible problem. On the Cassino Front, I had made my arrangements with Captain Peterson of the 34th Division artillery, which covered the central Front. Two days before the landings, a typical fire plan was mapped. The projectiles were set for air bursts every hundred yards from the first positions on back for 800 yards. Then, on 22 January at 15:50 the leaflet was systematically exploded upon the startled German soldiers: they learned of Operation "Shingle" before their commanders did. Total surprise, the dreamed-for element of all battle, was achieved, on both Fronts.

But General Lucas, in command at Anzio, exhibited no hurry to dash for the arteries of communications and their protecting hills. For that matter, he hardly attended to the chance to sweep right into Rome, which was weakly defended and had a population eagerly expectant. As soon as they encountered significant resistance, his troops were ordered to dig in, to await reinforcement, despite their vast superiority in organization, numbers, artillery, and air power. Despite, too, the fact that they had a powerful navy off shore, which could defend them if they were forced back, employing the same kind of deadly fire that broke up the Axis counterattacks against the Gela beachhead in Sicily.

I was disturbed to hear that the operation had been checked by counterattack. I hurried to the Map Room of G-2 of Fifth Army. I was astonished by what I saw there. The invading forces had identified at least two-score enemy elements. True. But they were scraps of this and that. The Germans were halting every *landser* going or coming on leave or from hospital, any vehicle, gun, unit - no matter of what division or special designation or competence - and throwing them together into a makeshift "Army," and pushing them forward against the Americans and British. The Allies waited; better German units arrived; the Germans counterattacked incessantly, as they were doctrinally commanded; and the new Anzio Front froze.

The Germans were so proud of their performance that they prepared their own leaflet, something rare on the Cassino Front. They reproduced part of the Allied leaflet, then placed a tiny dot alongside the beach on a map of Italy, far from Cassino, and crowed: "Here is their bottling up (*Kesselschaft!*)" I wrote to my wife that the Beachhead "is like a bird-cage into which the enemy can poke his finger anywhere. But already he's been bit, and bit badly."

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Third Division, P.O. Box Anzio, asked for somebody to talk sense into the enemy. Martin Herz volunteered. I was willing to go but it didn't take much persuasion for me to concede my part of the job to a new comrade, Infantry Lieutenant Joe Ferla, who had a gentle smile and a willing heart, and felt that this was his dish of tea. They went by boat, bearing with them the loudspeaking equipment needed to talk across the lines. With local help, Herz and Ferla set up. The amplifier was sneaked forward - to within sniper's range of the enemy. They left it there and followed back the wire they had laid. Then they started to talk into a microphone. What they said was deemed obnoxious, apparently. Or perhaps it was too seductive. An 88mm artillery shell explodes nearby. Martin Herz is blown about and scratched up. Joe Ferla is struck by shrapnel in the guts and hip. He holds his guts in and tries to roll under his jeep and is hit again, this time by a 50 cal machine gun bullet. Martin calls for help and they are evacuated. With some surprise on all sides, especially his own, Joe survives and begins the long journey back through the chain of hospitals that ultimately ends with the Big PX. And here I wonder whether I ought to have gone and done the job right, which, translated, means, whether they would have had better luck had I gone myself.

Joe met nursing friends in his second hospital. They had been guests of the Team below Cassino. The Team was now on a field, well-drained, with a large cave alongside, complete with giant wine barrels without wine. They turned this into an officers' mess and club for all personnel. Otherwise they camped on stones or in the mud. "Club Rainmaker" inspired a party or two. Of this one I am writing ruefully, swearing that I hardly ever have behaved so.

Tomorrow is Leap Year Day and I regret deeply that you won't be around to offer me some sort of amorous inducement. Herz is in an even worse position since one of his few golden opportunities to snatch a bride is wasted on the tent and myself. I thought I denoted a note of rancor in his leaflet today. For most of today, I felt I had been clubbed. The assailant was the demon rum, the dissolving agent at a drinking party last night. The party was a classic of stag drunks, a group of men all with hidden talents that came out as the cognac went in. There was singing (shouting), violence to property and person, and some remarkably good specimens of solo dancing. Everyone at one time or another was ushered onto the dance floor by his guiding spirit and committed to the dance. Tom Crowell and Jim Clark were best, Tom with a complete repertoire of old burlesque songs and soft shoe steps, Jim with a gay, graceful Sprite of Spring affair. The publisher of the New York Post, whose name has slipped me at the moment made a most beautiful partner for Tom in a couple of steps straight from old vaudeville. I can't possibly describe how funny they were, typical old New York specimens. My modest contribution was bit parts in a couple of spontaneous and united buck and wings. I did somewhat better on the ballads, and was pretty good in the knife-throwing contest, though when I broke the bone handle of my knife, the latter degenerated into chair-throwing. Finally Tom, who had been sweet and jolly all evening, knocked Hindley down, which sobered up Hindley who was then able to drive our car. We got lost, infuriated a guard and finally got to bed. This morning I didn't feel so good.

Back in December, I established a daily routine. Each day I crawled out of my bedding roll, usually first one up in the tent of four officers, brew coffee in a heavy tin can on the pot-bellied stove while shaving, and began my rounds of the Front. I could not tell at the beginning of a day how far I could get and whom I would see. I could be sure of seeing the barren hills, the exploding shells, both friendly and hostile, the dug-in companies, the destroyed farmhouses and bombed villages, the peaks of the Apennines turning white in the first snows of winter, and roads that were sometimes asphalted and pitted with shell-holes, at other times dirt roads and often only paths. I drove a Willys jeep that had lost its exhaust pipe against a stone and could cause nearby soldiers to dive into ditches when it backfired; I got it fixed at a motor pool down the line, so I could drive in peace with just the ordinary noises of warfare, the continuous booming of cannon from one point or another of the compass, the artillery shells that shrieked, the crazy jackass brays of the six-mouthed *Nebelwerfer* mortars. I almost never heard the small arms fire, being a safe distance away (I

hoped), if only because they signaled an attack or counter-attack and were accompanied by deafening cannonading and occasionally by aircraft diving and bombing in support, always of the Allies, never of the Luftwaffe.

I was continually uneasy about land mines (over a half-million actually were dug up around Cassino alone); I hated the thought of getting my legs or balls blown off. The refrain of the song: *no balls at all, no balls at all, she married a man, who had no balls at all*. Mines seemed to be everywhere at first, but as the front stabilized they were discovered and deactivated, and besides I tried to keep to familiar paths known now to be free.

Captain Foster had a similar job with British Corps on the left flank to the Sea. They had their tea-times on occasion. *"You know what I'm doing now? Sweating out a pot of tea with Foster. Foster is jumping up and down besides the stove watching the water begin to boil. It's very important, the process, to the British. They make a gay, childish fetish of it, towards which I feel very sympathetic."*

When my wife asked about my health, I replied that I was *"very healthy, hardly ever miss a full meal, and even, strange as it may seem, visit my favorite toilet regularly. That last is a laugh. One of my victory aims is to get established on a familiar toilet seat once more. Vulgar, isn't it? But not, if you've visited the great number of inquisitorial devices I have. It does make one versatile and agile, anyway. The present one is a wood crate, worked over by some reluctant EM who apparently had 1) either a grudge against the power-wielding class, 2) or a very tiny bottom. In Foster's words, it's like trying to pass a camel through the eye of a needle. And in the cold dawn, a half inch of frost doesn't help."*

One time Foster came in quite late because he had been held up at a bridge under fire, which the German guns could not hit in just the proper way to collapse it, and finally they quit; but he was mostly impressed by a dead civilian without a hat, "without a hat," he said repeatedly, and one couldn't fathom why this detail should so obsess him. But then I recalled the old Lancastrian song I had been taught, which in dialect goes something like this: *Nympt te moor pah thet, o nympt te moor pah thet, o nympt te moor pah thet*, sung as medieval church dirge. *Else ye shall catch thy death o could:..... repeat and refrain then we shall av to bury theethen'll cum th'wurms and et thee oop.... then will th dooks cum et th wurms....then we shall kill and et te dooks...so we shall av to et thee oop* and of course it ends as it begins, *"don't go out on the moor without your hat."*

Foster had worked with the first leaflet-cannon in North Africa, a 25-pounder that he drove around with its crew, firing upon targets of opportunity. Now the peddler's little business had expanded. It was big business in which they were engaged in, a business that prospered when times were bad but capital was available, climaxing on the Cassino Front between January and May of 1944. The analogy of combat propaganda with a business enterprise could be carried far: research and development, industrial design, licensing to sell, sales territories, raw material purchases, processing and production, warehousing and distribution, advertising, customer relations, volume of sales: all of these had highly analogous operations in combat propaganda. The work was subsidized, hence not conforming to the private capital model; but if a percentage of incoming surrenders and breakdowns in morale were toted up as sales and paid for on delivery, the operation, if cleverly and efficiently conducted, would be quite profitable on the whole.

There was a psychological and ideological difference, very important, such that no one, I, Habe, even Weaver, would ever have tolerated the business analogy: our operation was intimate with the State, with the sacred symbols of government, with all that makes war so interminable and inevitable, the "participation" of gods, sacrifice, honors, martyrdom; war is a sacred activity to the Great Body of Society, never mind the poor devils unwillingly at high risk.

The Team moved out of Caserta to consolidate the operation and to catch up with the Front, leaving Buck Weaver behind for Army liaison, still our Commander. We located in the ruins of a farmhouse, camouflaged, and out of range of all except heavy artillery and aircraft, from which there was apparently no threat. That's where "Club Rainmaker" was.

Visiting firemen were ever more common, from units across Italy, from Army HQ, from Naples, from North Africa, even from London and the States, for the slaughter, misery, and legends of Cassino were becoming famous by word of mouth, soldiers' letters, newspapers, and film. It was the

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only European ground show where the Westerners were admitted. To hear the artillery serenade, to see bombs bursting in air, occasional dogfights in the sky, and the famous bleary-eyed bearded characters of Bill Mauldin's cartoons: that was the ticket. I sometimes carried a visitor along, warning him not to appear curious about what he was seeing and not to attempt joviality, prayers, or righteous wrath, nor optimistic forecasts about the end of the war or the waning power of the Germans.

Lt. Commander Livingston Hartley was irrepressible. He was so different, in his braided peaked naval cap and naval insignia, that soldiers were bemused. After all, his business was boats, which they vaguely realized were separate and distinct ways of winning a war. Liv came in one time telling of watching across the lines to a farmhouse under fire and of "a funny little German running in and out crazily." It appeared that every visitor formed his own peculiar indelible memory.

Not long afterwards he was riding with me, who was going up a road taken often before without being fired upon; but suddenly large calibre shells whistle overhead and begin to crash nearby. Hartley leaps out and runs for the ditch and rubble, I behind him for I have to stop the jeep before jumping, so I am struck by the absurd sight of this lanky naval officer in the flapping huge long greatcoat and the visored cap skipping along the side of the road. I blamed Hartley for the incident. The same German observer, who had watched me on various occasions and thought me too insignificant a target to waste some precious shells on, spotted the braid and thought, now we'll catch ourselves a General!

I did a little visiting on my own, to Naples where I bedded down with "D Section" at the splendid Palazzo Caracciolo. I joined in the general elation at the news from Algiers that Col. Hazeltine, our detested Chief of Psychological Warfare Operations, had been summarily relieved of his command on December 24; C.D. Jackson was temporarily running the show until a military Commander was designated. There were now new English arrivals to meet, John Reynor, a media executive; John Vernon, a more typical aesthete and scholar; and Edmund Howard, rather like his brother, Hubert, except that he had a more distinctive and wry sense of humor and was more of this world. (A third brother, Lord Howard, was G-2 with Eighth Army HQ.) There was talk of my coming back to join them; I, more militaristic of mind, was hoping for a breakthrough by some means. Whereupon I might do another Bari caper and be one of the first to arrive in Rome. Just imagine its plethora of media-control challenges! And other joys!

I fixed up a ground hut for myself alone out of a mosquito net and the canvas of two pup tents, sleeping on a canvas cot, shaded by bulrushes. I was practically sewn into my long woolen underwear, and slept rather like a pickle in a herring roll-mop, four blankets and a quilt inside a canvas roll. It was from here that I now left upon my daily milk run. The weather was bad, the troops in a poor mood. The Army was stuck; one could add brightly: "But the Russians are doing great." This Front was beginning to look permanent. New things were being added. More and more ammunition and artillery and airplanes arrived so that the enemy was subjected to practically continuous bombardment and dared not move about in the light. As if I didn't know, a leaflet told me: "We are firing twenty shells to your one and, if we need to fire another five, we can do that too!"

The Army Quartermaster had moved up an ingenious system, a mobile bath and clothing exchange. Soldiers proceeding along the main road, Highway 6, South of the front lines, were directed by a sign to where they could strip off their clothing, hand it in, take a hot bath, receive a set of fresh clothing, get back in their vehicle and go on their way. I was favorably impressed by it. Americans were dirtier at the Front than the English: I recalled Heycock in Sicily bathing daily out of his helmet, using a large sponge that he treasured; Heycock always walked after a meal, too, as if he didn't walk the rest of the day. I came upon several Germans, just surrendered, one morning; they had emerged from days of a filthy inferno; one blonde sad lad was picking dirt from another like him, and combing his hair with the carefulness that monkeys use on one another. Maybe Americans learned as children to punish their mothers by dirtying themselves. And now they were

punishing the Army in a way that was hard to prevent.

There was a lot of dirtiness among the troops, despite directives to the contrary; trench foot was common; no one wanted to take off his boots and socks in the cold and muck and what the hell, so a guy spends a few days in the hospital... he needs the rest anyhow! Let them cut off a toe, for that matter; it's better than going back to the foxholes. Foot disease was the Cassino campaign's equivalent of the malaria of the Sicilian campaign.

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