

DODGING FIRE AS BULLETS RATTLE IN THE HOLY LAND

A War Correspondent Gets Into Territory Where Jews
Are Fighting Arabs and Finds it Advisable
to Keep His Head Low.

By GEORGE FIELDING ELIOT.

ATHENS—We drove into Jerusalem from the east through Arab territory. Except for one road block, we saw no sign of trouble. As we came to the top of the hill, the sun was shining on the walls of the Old City and the dome of the Mosque of Omar. Children were playing in the streets and shops were open in the suburban villages.

We drove round the Old City and along the north face of the wall past the Damascus gate. Then suddenly we came on an armored car manned by two British constables of the Palestine police, its guns trained to command the broad avenue leading down into the British security zone. There was a sandbag barrier guarded by young soldiers of the Warwickshire regiment. As we pulled up to show our passes, a burst of machine gun fire chattered for in the distance.

"Keep Your Heads Down."

"They're at it again down in Katamon," grinned the Warwick's lance corporal as he waved us on. "Keep yer 'eads dahn, lads."

We drove to the public information office, and found it in the course of being looted by a ragtag and bobtail of local characters who were carrying out typewriters, chairs and odds and ends.

There were some American correspondents in the bar hastily consuming the contents of the last few bottles to save the contents from the looters. The firing in Katamon was much nearer and louder.

"You're just in time," we were told, "the Haganah is putting on a personally conducted tour of the Katamon front at 2 o'clock. You guys wanta go?"

We certainly did want to go, so off we went up the hill to the little Salvia hotel where I had stayed during my earlier visit to Jerusalem.

The Military Courts building across the street was now occupied by the Jewish army as its headquarters and the Palmach battalion which had been moved in for the Katamon fight was partly quartered there.

Through the Red Tape.

We had quite an argument at the road block just below the Salvia because, having driven from Damascus, we had Syrian license plates on our car stamped in Arabic characters which the Jewish sentries didn't like the looks of. We finally got them to send to the headquarters building for a security officer, whom fortunately I knew, and we got through. We drove the car into the headquarters compound, where it remained during our stay—I venture to say the only Syrian car yet to be watched over by a Haganah guard.

The party of correspondents soon collected and we went down the hill toward Katamon. Midway there was a road which was enfiladed by an Arab Bren gun in a building some 800 yards away. We waited till a burst was fired, then a few at a time we would make a run for it. My friend Andy seemed to be on the Arab death list—every time the Bren gunner saw him he would let drive. Anyway, we got over safely, went along a communication trench and reached the advance headquarters of the Palmach battalion, where we were most efficiently briefed by a young Jewish company commander on the course of the fighting in Katamon, which had by then reached the mopping up stage.

There were, however, still Arab mortars firing from the west, so we could not get the battalion commander to let us go up to St. Simeon, center of the Jewish position, in an armored car. Very properly he said he was afraid he might lose the car and while he did not mind taking risks for military purposes, he did not consider this risk justified.

So we returned to the Salvia, and

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just then the Arab mortars opened up. They seemed to be trying to hit the Jewish headquarters across the street, but the shells were actually falling about 200 yards beyond. Andy and I went up to the roof of the Salvia to see if we could spot them. As soon as we appeared bullets began to go pfft-pfft overhead, as we were in full view of Arab-held houses. We stepped back inside the little penthouse and I was fool enough to peer around the edge of the open door. More bullets.

Retreat Just in Time.

Andy said, "George you'd better get inside." I thought so too and stepped back. Whang went a bullet right through the door at a spot where my stomach had been five seconds before.

We went down and had a drink, and somebody came in and said, "Fawzi is shelling the Jewish quarter in the north of the City." We didn't believe it, but since one of the Haganah security officers was going up there we went along. We did hear some shells burst, but when we arrived in the area which had been fired on everything seemed quiet and the people were out in the streets again. "There's a shell crater," said Andy. We pulled up, and got out of the car to examine

the crater. Andy regarded it with a critical eye.

"Probably a seventy-five," he said, walking round it. Wham! A shell hit about fifty yards away, scattering debris along the street. Andy and the girl driver dived at the same moment for the nearest cover which was the open door of a bicycle repair shop. The girl being heavier than Andy went through first and Andy rolled in on top of her. I had to run around the car to make it and by the time I got inside another shell had landed somewhat closer. Some plaster fell off the ceiling and went down my neck, which didn't improve my feelings.

The Jewish security officer took us through into another and stronger building where we sat on the floor in a safety area with two Jewish children and an old woman who cursed the British bitterly every time a shell hit. She seemed to hold the British personally responsible for Fawzi Bey Kawukji and his roving artillery. About a dozen more shells were fired, creeping nearer and nearer. The last one shook the building to its foundations. But it was the last, and after a while we went out into the sunlit street and drove back to the hotel.

This time we really needed that drink.

It had been a busy afternoon.

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NEW POPULAR RECORDS.

The unaccompanied versions of "My Happiness" now are beginning to appear. The Pied Pipers (Capitol) and the Marlin Sisters (Columbia) do passable jobs, but neither is likely to do much damage to the Jon and Sondra Steele (Damon) original.

"Tea Leaves" is a new release that may go places and Jack Smith (Capitol), with the Clark Sisters, give it a nice lift. The pairing is the oldie, "Highways Are Happy Ways."

"It Only Happens When I Dance With You" is another good new one that will get a good play. Four versions are available, all good—Perry Como (RCA-Victor); Guy Lombardo (Decca); Andy Russell (Capitol), and Frank Sinatra (Columbia).

Two singing groups, the Dinning Sisters (Capitol) and the Charlioteers (Columbia) harmonize well on a cute tune called "The Last Thing I Want Is Your Pity."

A clever novelty number about a little tugboat, from Disney's "Mel-

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